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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000351

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [ASEC](#) [CG](#)
SUBJECT: SITUATION REPORT 1: GUNFIRE, CONFUSION IN GOMBE
SECTION OF KINSHASA

REF: A. AMBASSADOR-OPS CENTER TELCONS
[1](#)B. KINSHASA 322

[1](#)1. (U) Small arms and rocket-propelled grenade fire broke out in the downtown Gombe area of Kinshasa March 22 between elements of the Congolese military (FARDC) and the guard forces of former Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba. Isolated shots were first reported around 10:30 a.m., and heavier firing began around noon in the immediate area of Bemba's official residence on Boulevard de 30 Juin. The fighting comes after a supposed March 15 deadline passed requiring the replacement of Bemba's and Azarias Ruberwa's guard forces with a smaller number of police officers (reftel). Neither Bemba nor Ruberwa had turned over the guards by the deadline.

[1](#)2. (U) Post's Emergency Action Committee convened at 3:45 p.m. and 6:15 p.m.. The EAC decided to advise all AmCits and Embassy personnel to remain in their present locations until further notice. The Consular section has sent out three text messages on the warden system advising all AmCits to remain in place. The consul has spoken to nearly three dozen AmCits in various locations in Gombe to ascertain their condition and reports there are no injuries or fatalities. There are 760 registered AmCits in the DRC and 142 mission personnel.

[1](#)3. (U) Forty mission employees, including local staff, are preparing to spend the night at the Chancery. Another 45 personnel will spend the night at the JAO compound. There are an additional 45 personnel in the USAID near the Chancery.

[1](#)4. (U) MONUC's Radio Okapi broadcast around 6:30 p.m. a phone call from Bemba in which he called for a ceasefire. President Kabila has not yet responded to Bemba's statement. MONUC is working to facilitate a ceasefire between the two. The Ambassador, MONUC and other foreign capitals have placed calls to both sides emphasizing the need for an immediate ceasefire.

[1](#)5. (SBU) SRSG Swing held an emergency meeting at 2:30 p.m. with UNSC members at MONUC headquarters, with only the Ambassador and the Belgian charge able to attend. At the end of the meeting, Swing received a phone call from President Joseph Kabila, who said there had been no order to attack Bemba's guards, but that all options had been exhausted to achieve political means for Bemba's guards to report for integration/DDR and be replaced by police guards. Kabila said he had no intention of harming Bemba, adding there is still room to negotiate regarding the number of guards Bemba can have and the conditions of their assignment. He insisted all of Bemba's troops must report for integration.

[1](#)6. (U) There have been additional reports of fighting within

the Gombe area, but it has not spread to other parts of Kinshasa or elsewhere in the country. Contacts with the British and Dutch embassies near the Presidential offices reported around 3:00 p.m. continuous small arms and suspected mortar fire in their vicinities, and told us they have seen artillery and Republican Guard reinforcements arriving near the presidency. MONUC military officers and witnesses at the American School witnessed two tanks leaving the FARDC's Camp Tshatshi heading towards the downtown area. The Canadian

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Political Counselor reported that one tank had passed in front of her embassy building, near the presidential offices, around 3:30 p.m.

17. (U) MONUC has expanded its cordon of peacekeepers around the main area of fighting and is working to separate the two sides. MONUC's Joint Mission Analysis Center told us MONUC has called for reinforcements from Bas-Congo, Western and Eastern Kasai, and Maniema provinces, although none are expected to arrive immediately. There are presently 250 peacekeepers in Kinshasa; the planned reinforcements would bring MONUC's strength to approximately 800.

18. (U) A building on the JAO compound closer to the main fighting was hit by a stray bullet. In addition, several unidentified Congolese men fired their weapons at the guard booth of the main JAO entrance, damaging the window. No injuries were reported from either incident, and the RSO has initiated an investigation. There are no reports of Embassy personnel or AmCits injured. Embassy personnel at the Chancery, JAO compound and USAID building have been instructed to remain in place.

19. (U) Other missions are reporting that their personnel have

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likewise remained in place.

10. (U) The regularly scheduled SN Brussels flight to Kinshasa was canceled. The regular Air France did arrive as scheduled this evening.

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